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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAMAKO 000128

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SUBJECT: WITH EYE ON 2012, SECOND LARGEST POLITICAL PARTY  
IN MALI PREPARES FOR APRIL LOCAL ELECTIONS

REF: A. BAMAKO 00070

[1](#)B. BAMAKO 00073

Classified By: Political Officer Aaron Sampson, Embassy Bamako,  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1.(C) Summary: In a meeting with the Embassy on February 26, the president of Mali's second largest political party and National Assembly vice-president Younoussi Toure raised no significant concerns regarding the timing of upcoming local elections scheduled for April 26. Questions about the accuracy of Mali's electoral lists have led several opposition parties to demand an electoral postponement (Reftels). For Union for the Republic and Democracy (URD) president Toure, postponing the elections would be more "dangerous" for Malian democracy than moving ahead as planned. While Toure described the timing of elections as a third rail best left untouched, he did recommend revisiting regulations regarding registration of political parties, noting that there were now something like 116 political parties in Mali. Toure also said the URD aimed to elect more local officials on April 26 than any other party in Mali. Toure's comments indicated that the rivalry between the URD and Mali's largest political party, the Alliance for Democracy in Mali, is back on. This rivalry was put on hold in 2007 when ADEMA and the URD jointly endorsed President Amadou Toumani Toure's (ATT) re-election bid. With ATT's second and final presidential term now nearly halfway complete, the URD is clearly looking to the April local elections as the first step toward sending its political leader - president of the Commission of the West African Monetary Union Soumaila Cisse - to the presidency in 2012. End Summary.

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The Elections Must Go On  
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2.(SBU) On February 26 the president of the URD, Younoussi Toure, dismissed complaints articulated by opposition leaders regarding the need to postpone April 26 local elections due to problems with Mali's electoral lists. The URD is Mali's second largest political party behind only the Alliance for Democracy in Mali (ADEMA) party in size and elected office holders. The URD has 29 seats in the Malian National Assembly. During the 2007 presidential elections the URD joined with ADEMA to endorse President Amadou Toumani Toure (ATT) for re-election. Together ADEMA and URD formed the backbone of ATT's 2007 political coalition, known as the Alliance for Democracy and Progress (ADP). Although the glue holding the ADP together has weakened somewhat since 2007, the URD remains highly supportive of ATT. URD President Younoussi Toure - no relation to ATT - and other URD officers indicated that this support is based largely on the URD's belief that its political leader, current president of the Commission of the West African Monetary Union Soumaila Cisse, will be ATT's chosen successor in 2012.

3.(SBU) URD president Younoussi Toure served as Prime Minister during the 1990s under former President Alpha Oumar

Konare and was elected vice president of the National Assembly in 2007. During his meeting with the Embassy Toure rejected opposition arguments that communal elections scheduled for April 26 should be postponed due to problems with the electoral voter list. While conceding that the electoral list had problems, Toure noted that the problems raised most recently were no different than those raised prior to Mali's presidential and legislative elections in 2007. Toure said the URD saw no reason to delay the local elections and argued that postponing regularly scheduled elections was "dangerous" for Malian democracy. "In a democracy," said Toure, "elections need to be held on time. The terms of office holders need to be renewed." Toure said those calling for a postponement were not acting in good faith since the electoral lists flaws have been well known since the presidential and legislative elections of 2007. Since everyone in Mali knew that local elections would occur in 2009, Toure said politicians unhappy about the electoral lists should have spoken up sooner as opposed to waiting for the Malian government to officially unveil the date of the 2009 contest.

4.(SBU) When asked about URD's hopes for the upcoming communal elections, Toure said he had just returned from a trip up country intended to energize the URD party faithful. According to Toure, the URD is shooting to win more elections than any other party in April. During the last local elections in 2004, the URD claimed slightly more than 1600 of the 11,000 locally elected officials. Mali's largest political party, ADEMA, has the most number of locally elected officials. Toure said that the URD is better known and better organized now, and hoped to translate this into a

BAMAKO 00000128 002 OF 002

better result. "We want to be first," said Toure.

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March Multiparty Madness  
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5.(SBU) Like other parties, the URD is facing a serious budget crunch. Toure said the URD was depending on member contributions to finance the April local elections campaign. Toure also complained that Mali's relaxed rules on the creation of political parties was adversely impacting the URD by funneling public financing funds away from legitimate parties like the URD and toward numerous non-existent micro-parties. On February 5 the Malian government announced the award of public financing totaling FCFA 1 billion (approx. USD 2 million) to be divided between 30 political parties for use during the April local election campaign. A total of 62 parties applied for funding. Parties receiving funds were selected based on audits of internal financial records conducted by the Accounting Section of the Malian Supreme Court. Funds were divided using a formula that weighed levels of party participation in previous elections together with the numbers of National Assembly Deputies, municipal councilors, and women officials elected to office by each qualified party. The URD will receive nearly FCFA 204 million (approx. USD 407,000) in public funds, second only to ADEMA which was awarded FCFA 357 million (USD 712,000).

6.(SBU) Indicating that he was speaking on his own behalf and not that of the URD, Toure said he believed there were too many parties in Mali. At last count there were 116 political parties in Mali, of which less than 10 are national in character. "This is too many political parties for 12 million people," said Toure. "We can't have 116 different development platforms." Toure attributed the multiplication of political parties to the fervor that accompanied Mali's democratic transition in 1991-1992. Toure said Malian leaders during the transition overcompensated for several decades of dictatorship by drafting rules enabling any individual or any political grouping to register as a political party. Toure said administrative reform of public

campaign financing laws provided the best way to bring the number of parties under control. He recommended that only parties with representation in parliament, or only parties that have secured a certain percentage of the vote during previous elections, should be eligible for public financing.

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Comment: An Eye to 2012  
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7.(C) As usual, Younoussi Toure presented a thoughtful and generally fair view of the challenges facing Malian democracy. His concerns regarding the dangers of postponing local elections are valid ones, especially since, as Toure noted, the evident flaws with Mali's electoral rolls have been known for some time and there is little Malian officials can do in the near term to rectify them. Toure's observations on the multiplicity of political parties were also interesting. Mali has previously adopted administrative measures designed to dampen the cacophony of political parties and fantasy political candidates. After 24 candidates ran for the presidency in 2002, Mali doubled the candidate registration fee for the 2007 presidential contest, thereby reducing the number of presidential candidates to eight.

8.(C) The URD may find itself hard pressed to outpace ADEMA for top performer in the upcoming local elections. The URD-ADEMA race for the most number of local officials could be an interesting one to watch, however, for two reasons: (1) on paper the URD and ADEMA remain allies within the ADP coalition; and (2) the URD and ADEMA are the two parties in Mali best positioned for the 2012 presidential election. ADEMA trumps the URD in terms of the number of elected officials in office, national membership and name recognition. However, the URD's presumed presidential candidate, Soumaila Cisse, is politically much more formidable than ADEMA's current front runner, National Assembly President Dioundou Traore.  
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